

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 SAB-01

OMB-01 EUR-12 ACDA-05 SAJ-01 /087 W

----- 123099

R 241103Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8694

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

DIA WASHDC

UNCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6755

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, SY

SUBJ: ISRAELI PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA

REF: TEL AVIV 6754

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SYRIAN REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL EXCEPT ON ITS OWN MAXIMALIST TERMS FOR THE MOMENT HAS TAKEN PRESSURE OFF ISRAEL TO FACE HARD QUESTIONS OF SYRIAN/ISRAEL NEGOTIATIONS. ISRAELIS ARE IN NO RUSH TO HAVE SUCH NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN, AND SUPPORT GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT POSTURE OF WAITING TO SEE HOW UNDOF MANDATE RENEWAL ISSUE IS RESOLVED. LATEST IDF INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT HOLDS THAT SYRIA IS UNLIKELY TO LAUNCH ALL-OUT WAR, BUT DOES NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF LIMITED ACTION FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES--EITHER TO WRECK EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI INTERIM AGREEMENT OR FORCE ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS THROUGH US POLITICAL PRESSURE. COMMENTATORS AND  
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POLITICIANS BELIEVE THAT ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW AND

REPORTED US EFFORT TO ARRANGE ASAD/FORD MEETING  
MAY PRESAGE EVENTUAL US INITIATIVES FOR SYRIAN/ISRAELI  
AGREEMENT. FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, ATTAINMENT OF  
INTERIM AGREEMENT WOULD DEPEND IN LARGE MEASURE ON  
A) EXTENT OF US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL, AND B) WHAT  
POLITICAL QUID PRO QUO SYRIA WOULD BE PREPARED TO GIVE  
TO JUSTIFY WITHDRAWAL. ISRAELIS EVEN HAVE BEGUN THINKING  
THE UNTHINKABLE, REMOVAL OF ONE OR MORE SETTLEMENTS  
IN CONTEXT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT, AND DO NOT CATEGORICALLY  
RULE IT OUT. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI POLITICANS AND COMMENTATORS ON BALANCE  
ARE DISTINCTLY PLEASED WITH CURRENT GOI AND SARG  
NEGOTIATING POSTURES. ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED  
THAT IT IS PREPARED TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH  
SYRIA FOR OVERALL PEACE AGREEMENT WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS,  
WHILE SYRIANS AT THIS STAGE ADAMANTLY REFUSE TO  
NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL EXCEPT ON MAXIMALIST TERMS.  
FOR THE MOMENT, ISRAELIS HAVE BEST OF TWO WORLDS AS  
THEY SEE IT: THEY HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY ARE PREPARED  
TO NEGOTIATE AND YET ARE UNDER NO IMMEDIATE PRESSURES  
TO DO SO. AS FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON RECENTLY TOLD  
ISRAELI TV INTERVIEWER, BALL IS IN THE SYRIAN COURT.

3. FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, THERE IS NO GREAT RUSH  
TO CHANGE THIS SITUATION, AND IN FACT ITS CONTINUATION  
FOR SEVERAL MONTHS OR LONGER WOULD BE PERFECTLY  
ACCEPTABLE DEVELOPMENT. AS THEY SEE IT, THIS TIME  
WILL SHOW WHETHER SYRIAN INTENDS TO ACCEDE TO RENEWAL  
OF UNDOF MANDATE; BEYOND THAT IT WILL SHOW WHETHER  
SYRIA INTENDS TO EXERCISE POLITICAL OR MILITARY OPTION,  
OR AS RABIN DESCRIBED IT "THIRD" OPTION, NO WAR NO  
PEACE, WHICH IN EFFECT WOULD MEAN PROLONGATION OF THE  
PRESENT SITUATION WITH SOME INCREASE IN TENSION ON  
BORDER. (MOST RECENT IDF ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN IN-  
TENTIONS IS THAT SYRIA AT THIS STAGE IS NOT LIKELY  
TO LAUNCH ALL-OUT WAR. IDF DOES NOT, HOWEVER, EXCLUDE  
POSSIBILITY OF LIMITED SYRIAN MILITARY ACTION FOR  
POLITICAL PURPOSES. USDAO IR 6 849 0260 75).

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4. OBVERSE SIDE OF THIS EVIDENT PREFERENCE FOR PRO-  
CEEDING SLOWLY AND WAITING TO SEE WHAT SYRIA INTENDS  
IS CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AMONG ISRAELI PUBLIC FOR WHAT  
MAY HAPPEN ONCE NEGOTIATING PROCESS IS ENGAGED. FOR  
COMPLEX COMBINATION OF REASONS, ISRAELIS ARE PROFOUNDLY  
DISTRUSTFUL AND EVEN FEARFUL OF SYRIANS IN A WAY WHICH  
HAS NO COUNTERPART IN THEIR PERCEPTION OF OTHER  
CONFRONTATION STATES (REFTEL). STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

SO FAR HAS BOUGHT TIME FOR AVOIDING HARDER ISSUES, AMONG WHICH GOLAN HEIGHTS IS CERTAINLY TO BE INCLUDED. NEXT STEP, HOWEVER, WOULD FORCE THAT ISSUE TO THE FORE.

5. MOST ISRAELIS DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR PREFERRED SCENARIO IS THE ONE WHICH WILL ACTUALLY ENSUE. DOMINANT ASSUMPTION OF POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS HERE IS THAT CURRENT WAITING PERIOD LEADING UP TO RENEWAL OF UNDOF MANDATE IS PROBABLY NOT KICKOFF FOR NEW ROUND OF HOSTILITIES, BUT RATHER PRELUDE TO FRESH US INITIATIVE FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT. MEDIA HAS HIGHLIGHTED REPORTED US EFFORT TO ARRANGE FORD/ASAD MEETING IN EUROPE NEXT MONTH. WHILE COMMENTATORS HONESTLY ADMIT THAT THEY ARE IN THE DARK AS TO WHAT SYRIA WILL INDEED DO ON AND AFTER NOVEMBER 30, THEY SPECULATE THAT ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW HAD DUAL PURPOSE OF SEEKING NEW SOVIET ARMS UNDERTAKING AND AT SAME TIME CONSIDERING JOINTLY POLITICAL MOVES. SYRIAN POLITICAL OPTION IS SEEN AS VERY MUCH ALIVE.

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6. THUS, WHILE UNCERTAIN ABOUT TIMING FOR RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC MOMENTUM, ISRAELIS ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT U.S. INITIATIVE FOR INTERIM SYRIAN/ISRAELI AGREEMENT SOONER OR LATER WILL GET UNDERWAY. PREVALENT INTERPRETATION BOTH OF ASAD HARDLINE AND WASHINGTON RUMBLINGS ON POSSIBLE SCENARIOS (E.G., THREE KM WITHDRAWAL IS THAT THEY SET STAGE FOR PREPARING ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, GOI FOR HARD DECISIONS AHEAD.

7. ISRAELIS, AS IS THEIR WONT, INEVITABLY HAVE BEGUN THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE. WITHOUT TRYING TO SPELL OUT PRECISE TERMS OF NEGOTIATIONS, COMMENTATORS AND ACADEMICIANS DO NOT RULE OUT ACHIEVEMENT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT. GENERAL VIEW IS THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD REQUIRE TOUGHER, MORE ANGUISHED DECISIONS THAN RELINQUISHMENT OF SINAI PASSES AND OILFIELDS. ISRAELI PUBLIC'S EMOTIONAL PITCH AND ANXIETY WOULD  
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BE HIGHER, DEMONSTRATIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE VIGOROUS. NONETHELESS, THESE OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT IF GOI AND KEY MILITARY LEADERS FOUND TERMS OF INTERIM AGREEMENT VIABLE, IT PROBABLY WOULD CARRY.

8. FOR ISRAELI PUBLIC ONE OF MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO GOLAN HEIGHTS SETTLEMENTS. THESE SETTLEMENTS WERE PUT ON EIGHTS WITH GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, THEY REPRESENT ONE OF LAST "PIONEERING ACHIEVEMENTS" OF ZIONIST PHILOSOPHY, AND INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL OR RELOCATION OF ONE OR MORE OF THEM WOULD BE SEEN BY MANY ISRAELIS AS SERIOUS SETBACK. NONETHELESS, ISRAELI COMMENTATORS WITHOUT DOWNPLAYING THE DIFFICULTIES DO NOT CATEGORICALLY RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF MOVING ONE OR TWO SETTLEMENTS IN CONTEXT OF INTERIM AGREEMENT--DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME SUCH DECISION HAD TO BE TAKEN, DIPLOMATIC COMMENTATORS HARIF AND GOLAN (BOTH OF WHOM WERE PERSONALLY AGAINST INTERIM AGREEMENT) IN RADIO INTERVIEW LAST WEEK REFUSED TO EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT AGREEING TO SUCH AN INTERIM AGREEMENT. PROFESSOR MOSHE MAOZ, ONE OF ISRAEL'S LEADING SYRIAN EXPERTS AND A MAINSTREAM ISRAELI, WROTE IN OCTOBER 17 YEDYOT AHARONOT THAT IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO THINK THAT POLITICAL PROGRESS CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH SYRIA WITHOUT REMOVING ONE OR MORE SETTLEMENTS; ISRAEL, HOWEVER, MUST DEMAND TOTAL DEMILITARIZATION OF ANY AREA IT EVACUATES UNTIL SYRIAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS ARE NORMALIZED.

9. FOR MANY ISRAELI OBSERVERS KEY TO WHETHER ITERIM AGREEMENT IS ATTAINABLE IS TWOFOLD: A) HOW HARD U.S. WILL "PRESSURE" ISRAEL; AND B) WHAT SYRIA WILL BE PREPARED TO GIVE ISRAEL AS QUID PRO QUO FOR WITHDRAWALS. MODERATE POLITICIANS, WHO SUPPORT CONTINUATION OF NEGOTIATING MOMENTUM AND URGE CONSIDERABLE ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY, BELIEVE SYRIA WILL HAVE TO MAKE SOME KIND OF HIGHLY TANGIBLE POLITICAL CONCESSION IN ORDER TO "LEGITIMATE" RISK TAKEN BY ISRAEL AND ENABLE GOI TO SEAL AGREEMENT TO PROFOUNDLY SUSPICIOUS ISRAELI PUBLIC.

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## Message Attributes

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**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, PUBLIC ATTITUDES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 OCT 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 TEL AVIV 6754  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 18 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <18 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ISRAELI PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA  
**TAGS:** PFOR, IS, SY  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006